



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Health Services

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Scott Walker, Governor  
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## **Carbon Monoxide Threat Grows in Winter**

*New law requires carbon monoxide detectors in dwellings*

MADISON – With the return of below zero temperatures and an upcoming state law requiring carbon monoxide detectors in residences, health officials today reminded everyone to be aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO). Earlier this week, a malfunctioning furnace caused several people in Rock County to be rushed to the hospital with potentially dangerous levels of CO exposure.

“The presence of carbon monoxide in homes is more common than people realize, especially during the cold weather months,” said Dr. Henry Anderson, Chief Medical Officer in the Department of Health Services. “The easiest way to protect yourself and your family is with a carbon monoxide detector.”

On February 1, 2011, a new law requiring carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to be installed in all one- and two-family dwellings takes effect. Newly constructed homes will require CO detectors that are directly wired to the home’s electrical service and existing homes may use battery-powered, stand-alone detectors. State law currently includes a similar requirement for multi-family dwellings.

Detectors work like smoke alarms to alert you to dangerously high levels of carbon monoxide. Battery powered portable CO detectors are also available for use away from home. Health officials recommend installing CO detectors on every level of your home and near sleeping areas.

CO is a colorless, odorless gas that can be emitted from poorly functioning or unvented furnaces or other gas powered home appliances. Outdoor appliances such as portable generators, heaters, and stoves, can also create dangerous levels of CO in cabins, campers, tents, and hunting and fishing shacks.

Symptoms of CO poisoning are flu-like and include headache, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath, nausea and mental confusion. High levels of exposure may lead to more serious health problems, including loss of consciousness and death.

Winter weather safety tips and information on carbon monoxide from the Department of Health Services:

<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/InjuryPrevention/WeatherRelated/WinterCold/index.htm>

<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/eh/ChemFS/fs/CO.htm>

Information on the CO detector requirements:

<http://commerce.wi.gov/SB/docs/SB-CodeDev2128HOAdoptDrft1110.pdf>

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